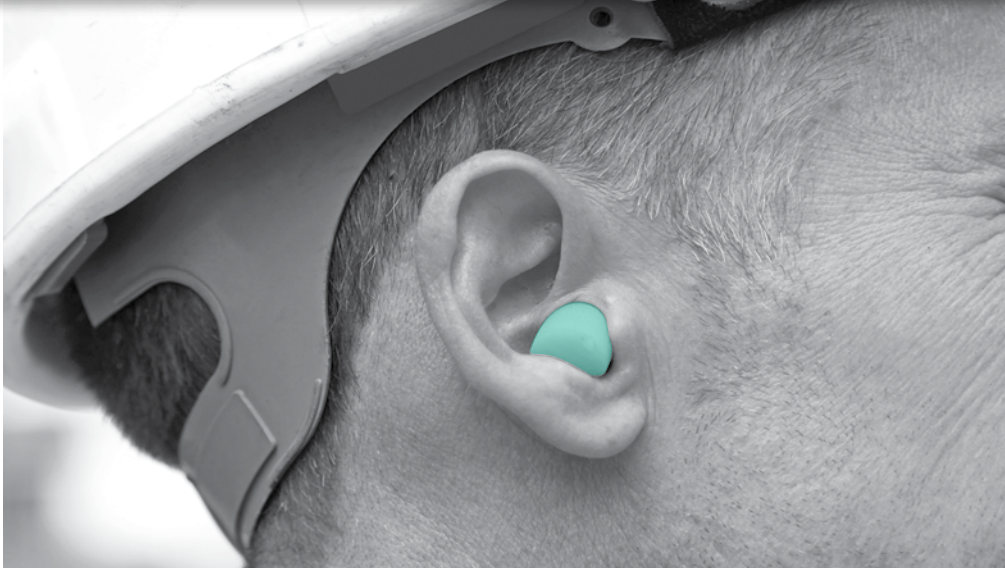




HEALTH REPORT

SPRING 2011



Cut Through the Noise: Protect Your Hearing

Don't muffle signs of noise-induced hearing loss.

Whether from work or play, noise-induced hearing loss is a common problem. In many cases, it's caused by exposure to loud noise over a long time, which damages nerves in the ears.

SIGNS OF HEARING LOSS

If you have trouble hearing, make an appointment to see your doctor. Any of the symptoms below can indicate hearing loss, especially if they cause you to avoid social situations or conversations.

- Turning up the TV or radio volume to a level too loud for others.
- Ordinary speech and sounds are muffled or unclear.
- Difficulty understanding what people are saying in a large group.
- Asking people to speak up or to talk more slowly or clearly.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

The good news is that hearing loss can be limited or even prevented. In addition to speaking with your doctor if you are subject to loud noise levels where you work or live, try these ideas to limit your exposure to harmful noise:

- **Protect your ears at work.** Use full-coverage ear covers (like earphones) or earplugs made of foam, plastic or rubber.
- **Turn down the volume.** When using earphones, take periodic breaks and keep the volume at a level where you can still hear noise around you.
- **Use ear protection when riding snowmobiles or motorcycles, or hunting.** In these cases, it's important to reduce these sounds, but not to silence them completely.

GEARING UP FOR SPRING

It's almost time to put on your sneakers and head outside. No matter what activity you choose, start slowly to get your body readjusted to exercise.

Walking is an easy, gradual way to tone your body and prepare for more strenuous exercise. So put on some comfortable clothes and walking shoes and take a stroll.

Start by mapping out a short route in an area that's familiar near your workplace or home. You can add a block or two, or speed up, each week as you get more fit.

To get the most from your walk, stand up straight and keep your head over your shoulders, your stomach pulled in and your shoulders loose. Breathe deeply.

The first five minutes of your walk should be at an easy pace, with the next 20 minutes at a speed that feels a bit more challenging. You should be able to talk in short phrases, not full sentences. Slow down gradually during the last five minutes of your walk and gently stretch your calves, thighs, chest, back and shoulders.



Too Much Caffeine?

You feel groggy in the morning, so you perk up with a cup of coffee. Then you have another cup on your break. Maybe another in the afternoon. And one more with dessert. Are you taking in too much caffeine?

It's possible, experts say. Most people can tolerate the caffeine in two to four cups of regular coffee daily. But more than that can affect your health. Too much caffeine can make it difficult to sleep, give you headaches or stomachaches, increase your heartbeat and make you jittery or anxious. Caffeine can also interact with some medications. And your age, body size and general health influence the way your body processes caffeine.

If you are going to drink beverages that contain caffeine, choose black tea or black coffee. Avoid adding cream and sugar, which increase calories. For the same reason, stay away from high-sugar, high-caffeine energy drinks and sodas.

Asthma Action Plan

If you have asthma, you know how important it is to keep this disease under control. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that you have a formal plan to manage your condition. Your doctor can help you tailor steps for yourself using these guidelines.

GREEN: DOING WELL

- You're not having any trouble breathing.
- You can take part in normal activities.
- If you use a peak flow meter, you are at 80 percent of your best peak flow.
- You may need to take an extra medication before exercise to prevent symptoms.

YELLOW: GETTING WORSE

- You are coughing, wheezing or short of breath.
- Asthma symptoms wake you at night or stop you from doing normal activities.
- Your peak flow is between 50 and 79 percent of your best.
- You may need to take extra medication to control symptoms.

RED: MEDICAL ALERT

- You are very short of breath.
- Your extra medication hasn't helped or symptoms get worse.
- Your peak flow is less than 50 percent of your best.
- You need to take your rescue medication and call your doctor.
- Someone should call for an ambulance if you cannot walk or talk, or your fingertips or lips start turning blue.

Dealing With Depression

An ongoing feeling of sadness isn't easy to talk about, especially for many men. But that feeling can be a sign of depression, which is a real illness that can affect you both mentally and physically.

Here are symptoms to watch for:

- Feeling sad for several weeks.
- Not enjoying activities you once liked.
- Spending a lot of time at work or on sports to avoid something at home.
- Becoming violent or abusive.
- Abusing alcohol or drugs.
- Taking part in reckless driving, infidelity or unhealthy sexual relationships.



If you have one or more of these symptoms, call your doctor. He or she can put you in touch with a support group or counselor who may be able to help you recover.



Not Just for Kids

While most vaccines are given to children, adults need some too.

No matter how old you are, you want to protect your health and that of your family. Getting the right vaccines to prevent serious illness is one of the best ways to safeguard health. Below are the most common adult vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As always, check with your health benefit plan to see which immunizations may be covered under your policy.

- **Flu Vaccine.** Every fall.
- **Pneumonia.** If you have a weakened immune system or a condition like asthma or diabetes, or you're over age 65, you'll need this vaccine about every five years.

- **Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis.** Every five to 10 years.
- **Measles, mumps and rubella.** One series, if you have certain risk factors such as frequent travel, work in a healthcare setting or didn't have an MMR as a child.
- **Human papillomavirus.** Once. Women ages 26 or younger need the vaccine to prevent cervical cancer; men of the same age should get it to prevent genital warts.
- **Hepatitis A and B.** One series, if you travel to parts of the world where hepatitis is common, work in healthcare, are sexually active but not monogamous, or inject illicit drugs.
- **Shingles.** Once after age 60.

If You're Stressed, STOP SMOKING

Giving up smoking could help you reduce stress, according to recent study results published in the journal *Addiction*.

Researchers followed nearly 500 smokers for a year, starting when they had a heart attack or heart bypass surgery. All of the smokers felt that smoking eased their stress levels. Those who quit smoking then said they felt less stress than when they were smoking.

What is interesting is this: Their stress levels didn't really change, but their perception of stress did. So, the researchers say, smoking doesn't affect stress levels. However, it does make people think more negatively. And that can make stress feel worse, which starts a vicious circle of smoking to relieve stress, which just makes the stress seem worse again.

If you're ready to quit smoking, talk to your doctor about options. Gum, patches or other kinds of medication are often available with a prescription and may even be covered by your health plan!

BEST FOODS TO FIGHT High Cholesterol

If your total cholesterol is over 199 mg/dL, and especially over 240 mg/dl, it's time to make a change. The first step is altering what you eat, a few meals at a time. The Mayo Clinic recommends swapping high-fat dishes for these five cholesterol-busting foods:

1. OATMEAL



Try eating about 1.5 cups of oatmeal daily. Add apples or bananas for an extra boost of flavor and soluble fiber, which helps prevent cholesterol from entering your bloodstream.

2. FISH



The omega-3 fatty acids in fish like albacore tuna, salmon and lake trout help reduce blood pressure and the risk of blood clots. Enjoy at least two servings of baked or grilled fish each week.

3. WALNUTS



Just a handful of unsalted, unsugared walnuts, almonds, pistachios or other nuts each day may reduce your risk of heart disease.

4. OLIVE OIL



The antioxidants in this oil help lower cholesterol. Replace butter, margarine or other fats with two tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil each day.

5. FRUITS AND VEGETABLES



The fiber in these foods helps sweep cholesterol from your body. Go for five to nine servings a day for best results.



Sweet and Sour Green Salad

190
CALORIES

1g
TOTAL FAT

310mg
SODIUM

Ingredients:

- 5 cups torn and lightly packed romaine lettuce leaves
- 3 cups lightly packed spinach leaves
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms
- 2 oranges, peeled and sliced
- 1 cup halved pitted prunes
- 1/2 cup sliced red onion
- 1/2 cup nonfat honey mustard dressing
- 1/4 tsp. coarsely ground black pepper

Instructions:

Simply toss all ingredients in a large bowl and enjoy.
Preparation time: 10 minutes.
Serves 4.

Nutrition information per serving:

190 Calories; 1g Total Fat;
310mg Sodium

A Salad a Day

Green up your meals.

The rich holiday treats are already in the rearview mirror. Now, what foods can help you get ready for spring and summer? A simple salad is a start.

The fiber and nutrients in a veggie-filled salad may help you feel healthier and drop a few pounds. The most important thing is to build your salad the right way.

Start with plenty of mesclun or spinach. Increase the nutritional value with chickpeas (garbanzos) or kidney beans, carrots, tomatoes, cauliflower, broccoli, green peas or a little cottage cheese.

Add flavor to your salad with no more than a tablespoon of one item from this list: grated cheese, hard-boiled eggs, raisins, roasted red peppers or sunflower seeds. Then top it off with a drizzle of olive oil and vinegar. And enjoy your healthy meal! You could also try the tasty salad recipe on this page.

Find more healthy recipes at fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov

This *Health Report* is being provided to you by the Chicago Regional Council of Carpenters Welfare Fund. You will receive *Health Report* twice a year. Its purpose is to keep you informed about current health and wellness topics that will help you and your family maintain your health and provide motivation to live healthy lifestyles.

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